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October 21, 1959

MEMORANDUM OF CONFERENCE WITH THE PRESIDENT

October 16, 1959

Others present: Ambassador Thompson, General Goodpaster

The President referred to a meeting he had held earlier in the day with Secretary Herter and others from the State Department regarding preparations for a summit meeting. He had found that the State Department was concentrating its efforts on an agreement to have a summit meeting with Khrushchev. He thought it would be better to turn our efforts to arranging a Western summit meeting in order to prepare our position, and some kind of "forthcoming proposal" of our own. Ambassador Thompson agreed that we must have our "ducks in a row" with our allies; otherwise we would be very vulnerable to Khrushchev's tactics. He thought, however, that we do not have to be ready to solve the Berlin question completely at the next meeting. It is too hard a nut to crack so easily.

The President agreed. He said he thought that our real effort should go into making some meaningful move toward disarmament. In addition, he thought we should work out something on trade and on exchanges with the Soviets. He commented that propaganda is one area where it is possible for us to tell if the Soviets are carrying out agreements they have made. Thus we would put Berlin in context, and the progress made through disarmament and other means would assist in solving these harder problems. He said that more and more he is coming to the view that complete reunification of the two parts of Germany is not going to be achieved early, and that it must in fact be achieved by the Germans themselves. He thought there was much in what Khrushchev had said on this point.

Ambassador Thompson said he thought that Mr. Khrushchev is determined to get a peace treaty with East Germany in order to nail down the eastern frontiers of Germany and of Poland, and thus remove these sources of future trouble. It was Ambassador Thompson's view that agreement on this matter is what Khrushchev really wants, and that it would take the sting out of the West

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Berlin question. He commented that Adenauer does not really want to try to get the eastern provinces back for Germany, that de Gaulle had said the same, and that Mr. McCloy had made a statement to the same effect. The President was much interested in Ambassador Thompson's comments on this point.

Ambassador Thompson next suggested that, if the President agreed, he would like to encourage Khrushchev to send over some more of his top people for informal visits around the United States. He commented that Khrushchev had invited Lodge to make a visit to Europe. He thought this was a good idea and would propose to Lodge that he come as his (Thompson's) guest. Ambassador Thompson said he hoped to be seeing more of Khrushchev informally in the future. The President said he joined in this and thought it was all to the good. He thought that someone as valuable as Khrushchev would be bound to disclose useful information in such talks. Ambassador Thompson said if he (Thompson) did this, he had some concern about making a few mistakes from time to time. The President said he had no concern about any minor errors on Thompson's part. The only point was not to abandon principle. Ambassador Thompson said he thought he might be able to help keep Khrushchev "right" on some of his tendencies toward misapprehension.

The President asked Ambassador Thompson, when he saw Mr. Khrushchev, to recall his visit with the President and say that the President wanted him to know he is trying to get the top people together on the Western side to work out something constructive, but that this does take time. He said Ambassador Thompson might add that Khrushchev has something of an advantage in this respect, in that the President has to work with allies. Ambassador Thompson said he felt that Mr. Khrushchev had some understanding of this since he had said in one of his speeches following the Camp David meetings that progress on the issues that divide us "will take a lot of work and a lot of patience." The President thought that by applying ourselves to the task it might be possible to have a summit meeting as early as December. Ambassador Thompson said that one point that worries him is that there seems to be some possibility that our efforts to achieve a suspension of atomic testing may be breaking down. He realized that a ban on atmospheric testing would be a considerable step forward. However, he thought that Khrushchev would

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take such a curtailment of the plan very hard since his main objective in Thompson's opinion is to keep China and Germany from getting these weapons. Mr. Thompson noted that resumption of underground tests would permit the Chinese and Germans to develop these weapons ultimately. Ambassador Thompson commented that Khrushchev is far out in advance of many of his people on this issue. Oftentimes he puts on a show for the benefit of his listeners in order to impress some of his associates. The President commented that Khrushchev cannot be as confident of his position as Stalin was. Mr. Thompson agreed.

Ambassador Thompson thought that Khrushchev may not leave Menshikov here as Ambassador for very long. The President said he had told Khrushchev he did not think Menshikov was doing much to improve relations between our countries. He told Ambassador Thompson he might indicate to Khrushchev, if occasion arose, that we are not happy with Mr. Menshikov. We are not complaining or asking for his removal, but the President would prefer to have an honest man here, even if he were a tougher one.


The President asked Ambassador Thompson to tell Khrushchev that we are just as interested as he is in pushing forward to resolve causes of tension, and the fact that he may not see anything happening on occasion does not mean that we have lost interest, but rather that there are great difficulties involved. The President thought that there are some possibilities open in the disarmament field. He does not take as pessimistic a view as that reported to him by Mr. Herter as having been reached by Mr. Coolidge. Suppose, for example, that we disarmed in everything but missiles and bombs. It is hard to see how any serious war could be initiated under those circumstances. Ambassador Thompson said he held the same view in his own thinking. He thought that Khrushchev really means and wants to make some progress in the reduction of armaments. He will have great opposition from some of his colleagues, and it is by no means sure that he can carry this out.

(Following this meeting, Ambassador Thompson met with me for about an hour to discuss prospects for our relations with the Soviets, and certain of the practical problems incident to a Presidential visit to Russia. He said he was concerned by the President's indication that he is analyzing the possibility of shifting our policy from an

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insistence upon reunification as an essential in Germany. He did not think that we should be ready to give away very much regarding Berlin. I told him I thought the President shared that view.)


A. J. Goodpaster
Brigadier General, USA



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